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Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Test Successful

In conjunction with the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), U.S. Pacific Fleet ships and crews successfully conducted the latest Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) at-sea firing event on July 30. During this event, entitled Stellar Avenger, the Aegis BMD-equipped ship, USS Hopper (DDG 70), detected, tracked, fired and guided a Standard Missile -3 (SM-3) Block (Blk) IA to intercept a sub-scale short range ballistic missile. The target was launched from the Kauai Test Facility, co-located on the Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF), Barking Sands, Kauai. It was the 19th successful intercept in 23 at-sea firings, for the Aegis BMD Program, including the February 2008 destruction of the malfunctioning satellite above the earth's atmosphere. Stellar Avenger was part of the continual evaluation of the certified and fielded Aegis BMD system at-sea today.

At approximately 5:40 pm (HST), 11:40 pm (EDT), a target was launched from PMRF. Three U.S. Navy Aegis BMD-equipped ships, the cruiser, USS Lake Erie (CG 70) and destroyers USS Hopper (DDG 70) and USS O'Kane (DDG 77) detected and tracked the target with their SPY radars. Each developed fire control solutions. At 5:42 pm (HST), 11:42 pm (EDT) the crew of USS Hopper fired one SM-3 Blk IA missile. The USS Hopper's Aegis BMD Weapon System successfully guided the SM-3 to a direct body to body hit, approximately two minutes after leaving the ship. The intercept occurred about 100 miles above the Pacific Ocean. USS O'Kane conducted a simulated engagement of the target. USS Lake Erie, with its recently installed upgraded Aegis BMD 4.0.1 Weapons System, detected and tracked the same target.

After Stellar Avenger, the same three ships participated in the first live engineering evaluation of Aegis BMD's next system upgrade. Engineers and ships crews recently completed installation and evaluation of an advanced version of the Aegis BMD weapon system. For the first time, the USS Lake Erie used this advanced system during a live firing to evaluate all fire control functions, including launch of a simulated SM-3 Blk IB. This is a typical step in the evaluation of any advancement in the Aegis weapon system. The USS Lake Erie will fire the new SM-3 Blk IB using this advanced weapon system in late 2010. This advanced Aegis BMD system will improve the probability of kill against advanced threats.

MDA and the U.S. Navy cooperatively manage the Aegis BMD Program. Lockheed Martin Maritime Systems and Sensors of Moorestown, New Jersey is the Combat System Engineering Agent (CSEA) and prime contractor for the Aegis BMD Weapon System and Vertical Launch System installed in Aegis equipped cruisers and destroyers. Raytheon Missile Systems of Tucson, Arizona is the prime contractor for the SM-3 missile and all previous variants of Standard Missile.

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